

The Bow and the Gun

by TheBleachDoctor

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Chief/John-117

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Summary: A bullet is more technologically advanced than an arrow, yet both can kill. When the UNSC discovers a Forerunner Slipspace gate leading to a galaxy far, far away, a certain rebellion gets a much appreciated benefactor. Set during the second and third movie, and Post-Human-Covenant war. Rated T for language and violence. (Any complaints about power values will be summarily ignored)

## 1. Chapter 1

\*\*Author's Notes:\*\* Alright, so this is my first Halo/SW crossover! I know this is just one drop in a lake, but I put my heart into this. I'm going to try my hardest to not violate canon SW details, so as a result, I am ignoring SW extended universe, to help with consistency. While the Empire will get some new ships, for the most part, I will be drawing my knowledge from the movies. All Halo material is consistent enough to be used as Canon. Enjoy!\_

Space is massive. The Universe has a boundary, but only in their wildest dreams can a living being ever encounter it. Spread throughout the universal sea, galaxies twinkle and spin like freshly fallen pollen on a summer breeze. The Milky Way was home to the Forerunners. They were powerful and widespread, but even they were limited by the vast amount of space separating each galaxy.

Or so it was thought.

\*\*[2587, November 17\*\*\*\*th \*\*\*\*, Location classified]\*\*

The ONI-Prowler Stone Angel fired its thrusters, rotating the entire stealth corvette 90 degrees. With its stealth systems disengaged, it looked like a vulture, with its swooping wings and angled head. The Stone Angel's sensors were currently trained on a massive Forerunner structure floating in empty space. It was ring shaped like a diamond, with certain sections completely detached from

the others, similar to Promethean architecture. Its surface shone with that reflective glint that was so characteristic of Forerunner structures, as staggered lines of windows shone out from recessed trenches in its surface. A blocky section at the top looked similar to a head, with a gaping mouth. That mouth happened to be a hangar bay.

The entire hangar section was all flat surfaces and angles, a Pelican sat just inside the opening of the hangar, a thin semi-permeable force field keeping the air in. The proud symbol of the UNSC adorned the side of the Pelican, as the craft's engines pinged as they cooled down. An Asian woman in a lab coat stepped out from the passenger bay, her short-cut black hair barely reaching her shoulders. In her hands, she was fiddling with a standard-issue UNSC M6H Magnum. She strolled over to the only door leading out of the hangar, into the main complex. Three marines were standing nearby, one armed with a M739 Light machine gun, the SAW, and the others with the MA5D ICWS, better known as the Assault Rifle. They were staring apprehensively at the door, as a single technician worked on getting the door open.

"Ma'am," the lead marine acknowledged the scientist, who nodded back.

"Lieutenant Powers, is this your first visit to a Forerunner installation?" the scientist asked.

Lieutenant Powers shook his head, "No, Dr. Zeng. I've been on a Halo before, helping wipe out the Flood populationâ€¦ Not something I look back fondly on."

Dr. Sophia Zeng smirked, "Well, you can rest easy, Lieutenant. You're only here for contingency purposes. We don't expect to find any Flood on this installation. Nevertheless, stay alert."

Powers flicked the safety off his SAW, "Yes Ma'am."

"I almost got itâ€¦" a young technician in an EVA suit tapped away at his data-pad as it was plugged into the door terminal.

The door beeped once, and whooshed open. With the exception of the technician, everyone had a gun pointed down the hallway. When nothing happened, the marines slowly started advancing down the corridor, Dr. Zeng and the technician bringing up the rear. As they moved, lights slowly started flickering on, as the dormant facility began to stir.

"No Monitor so far," Sophia remarked, "That doesn't reassure me."

In Flood-controlled Installations, the Monitors tended to be deactivated or overrun. A lack of a Monitor didn't indicate a Flood presence, but it didn't help suspicions.

"Now, Sophia," a voice echoes in Dr. Zeng's head, "Let's not go jumping to conclusions."

"Shut it, David," Sophia scolded her AI, "I'm trying to stay focused."

"Really now," David's avatar materialized just off her left

prosthetic arm, utilizing the built-in holographic projectors just under the artificial skin, "Is that any way to treat an old friend?" David's avatar appeared to be a scraggly brown-haired British man in a pinstripe blue suit.

"David," Powers snapped, "don't abuse the comms."

"Sorry, sir," the AI apologized as he went silent, his avatar fading away. Sophia sighed, redirecting her attention towards the hallway she was walking down. While being able to store a smart AI in her prosthetic arm came in handy, she could do without the rude attitude that David sometimes exhibited.

Dr. Zeng lost her left arm two years ago to a Flood combat form that had broken past the Marine's defense. She could have had an arm flash-cloned, but Sophia chose to replace her arm with a prosthetic of her own design. It sported a crystalline matrix capable of holding a ship's smart AI, above-average strength, and realistic skin. The icing on the cake, though, was an energy sword she managed to fit into the palm.

As the group approached the end of the hallway, the door slid open, revealing a large two-leveled circular room. They exited onto the top level, which was a circular walkway around a center pit. A large holographic representation of the ring-station flickered into being, as the holographic consoles and lights powered up.

"I've got nothing on the motion tracker," Lieutenant Powers reported, "Area is secure. Fan out."

Everyone went to a different part of the room. Powers led the other two marines to the bottom level while Sophia and the technician attended to the holographic consoles.

"Mark, are there any terminals?" Sophia addressed the technician, who nodded.

"One right over here, Dr. Zeng."

She approached it, pulling David out of her arm and inserting him into the terminal.

Within a few seconds, the holograph in the center of the room was replaced by a larger-than-normal David.

"This is just brilliant!" he remarked, "So much data here! I absolutely love Forerunner systems!"

Powers called out from the bottom level, "Hey, David, do we know the purpose of this station?"

"Hold on a second, lieutenant, still processing the information." The AI appeared to think for a few seconds, "Ah, there we go. This-"

Suddenly David's avatar disintegrated, as the entire structure began to shake, accompanied by a high-pitched humming noise.

Dr. Zeng lost her balance, falling and slamming her head into a nearby terminal.

The world went black.

Outside the station, the Stone Angel sat in the center of the ring, idling. Inside the Prowler, Captain Toshiko sighed, playing with a strand of her hair. When she had signed up to ONI, she had imagined a life of intrigue and adventure. Instead, she was shuttling scientists around the galaxy, without so much as a Covenant patrol group to spice up her life. That isn't to say she didn't do a good job. She was one of the better Prowler captains in the fleet. Toshiko could get the best performance out of her three decade old stealth corvette. Unfortunately, her ship was just that; three decades old. There was no way this old clunker was going to see front-line action. Unlike the most recent line of Prowlers, hers harkened to back during the Human-Covenant war.

The Stone Angel was top of the line back in her day, but it barely measured up to contemporary standards. The ship was perfectly capable of running dark, but its active camouflage was worse than those found aboard the new Rome-class frigates. Not to mention that the weapons systems couldn't manage to put a dent in the recently commissioned line of Tigershark corvettes. Hell, the ship couldn't outshoot a Longsword!

So Captain Toshiko of the Stone Angel was stuck playing chauffeur to a group of eggheads. Not that she had a problem with scientists. It's just that her job was a bitâ€| lackluster.

"Bond, anything interesting?" Toshiko groaned, leaning back in her chair.

On a pedestal in the cramped utilitarian bridge, a holographic pedestal lit up, and the avatar of the Stone Angel's smart AI materialized. Bond had chosen to represent himself as an old legendary spy from Earth, James Bond.

"Nothing so far," Bond stated, "Just footage from the survey team. Everything's fine so farâ€| hold onâ€|"

Bond's avatar flickered out of definition, as alarms started to blare.

"Buildup of Radiation, captain! It's coming from all around us!" The sensors officer yelled.

"Take us out of here!" Toshiko shouted, as the Stone Angel began to shake. Then everything went white.

It wasn't a long time agoâ€|

"Dr. Zeng! Sophia!"

Voices slowly began to rouse Dr. Sophia Zeng, as she groggily opened her eyes.

"I feel like shit," she groaned.

The technician handed her an ice pack, "Use this for now."

Sophia sat up, holding the ice against her head, "Urgh, David, status

report."

"It's bad news," David's voice echoed over the intercom, "I accidentally activated the station. It's! The Stone Angel is gone."

In a galaxy far, far awayâ€¦

Author's Notes: Thanks for reading! Next chapter will be up 2 weeks from now, max. Constructive criticism is welcome. Please, review.

><em>

## 2. In a Galaxy Far, Far Away

Author's Note: With the premiere of the first space battle in The Bow and the Gun, I have to clear up some facts about how the Imperial military are presented, and actually just the whole of Star Wars tech in general. First order of business; Star Wars Extended Universe. I'm not acknowledging Extended Universe. The whole bundle of Extended Universe books are about as contradictory as the Westboro Baptist Church. I can find an instance of the Executor atomizing more than three Star Destroyers that crashed into its shields at hyperspace, yet at the same time, a small railgun can bring down a Star Destroyer's shields in a few seconds flat. I can say that sand is more effective armor than normal, and that the Slave I somehow possesses enough power to incinerate a small moon.\_

So no. Anybody who knows anything that not only is Extended Universe non-canon, but the authors were given free reign, and lacked any sort of technological baseline to build off of. As a result, nobody can really tell you how powerful any Star Wars tech is. So, almost the entirety of the Star Wars Extended universe is shredded into oblivion, with only a few details saved. Let me address those issues now.\_

One thing I saved from the fires of continuity is some of the Imperial and Rebel ship designs. Let's face it, Imperial fighter craft are a joke. TIE Fighters are a sphere with engines and guns strapped on, coupled with some lovely panels that practically scream SHOOT ME. The fragile things are unshielded, and are crippled by glancing hits. If the Empire even wants to have a chance in hell of beating UNSC Longswords and Sabres, they'll need TIE Interceptors and the like.\_

Another thing is Stormtroopers. They are iconic to the Star Wars franchise, but they are rarely discussed in the movies. A close friend of mine claimed that they are organs stuffed in a suit. I have no idea where he got that from. I can't find any evidence to substantiate it. However, the evidence I did find was consistent enough to incorporate into this fic! Stormtroopers are enlisted men and women of all species, and their armor is pretty much a lightly armored environmental suit, which is pretty much tissue paper in the face of blaster fire, as is movie canon.\_

Slugthrowers are only mentioned in Extended Universe, but it is pretty much consistent, so the Imperials will recognize guns as such. Although since armor is meant to block DEWs, anything short of heavy armor will be so much tissue paper in the face of UNSC

weapons.\_

\_This brings me to another topic. Shielding tech in the Star Wars universe canonically does jack shit against physical projectiles. With the exception of Ray Shields, which are only present on specific droids and physical emplacements, Star Wars shielding tech is ineffective against physical projectiles. The best explanation I found of shields is that they forcefully retard incoming energy or projectiles. That is complete and utter bull. With the numbers that they give me along with that, the reactors on those ships would have to produce more power than a few stars. Even if I used that, it would mean the very air would damage shields, preventing them from being used in atmo. So I'm going by movie canon. Star Wars ship-mounted shields only block energy weapons. However, they will be more effective at blocking energy weapons than Covenant shields. So while that will help them in certain situations, they can't stop the MAC round that the UNSC will use to make swiss cheese of their fleets.\_

\_The last thing I'm going to bring up is the Forceâ€| I'm not sure how I'm going to go about this, but this is how I'm putting it for now. The Force comes from Midichlorians, and there are none in the Milky Way Galaxy. As a result, the Force is minimally effective against inanimate objects from the Milky Way Galaxy, and ineffective against people from the Milky Way Galaxy.\_

\_So feel free to send me reviews correcting me on Halo technology. However, if you send me reviews telling me about Star Wars tech and quoting Extended Universe books, I will laugh. If you include power values with those arguments, I will double over laughing, and fly off into the sun. Rule of Thumb: If it's not in the movies or violates movie canon, it's probably not going to be in this fic.\_

\_Also, the laws of physics will apply to starships.\_

\_So yeah, enjoy this chapter, and happy holidays.\_

\_New Years Update: Sorry, the starship battle will happen in Chapter Three. So sorry. Happy New Years.\_

\*\*Chapter Two: In a Galaxy far, far awayâ€|\*\*

Captain Toshiko Sato came to the conclusion that life was suffering, as she found herself sprawled out on the deck of her ship, with a headache that could put down a raging Jiralhanae.

"Status report," she groaned, clutching her head.

"Location is unknown, Captain," Bond supplied as his holographic avatar flickered into existence, "A Slipspace portal has transported us to an unknown location. The ship suffered a power surge at the moment of transit. Systems are rebooting and will be fully operational in a minute. However, all crew members will still suffer that headache for a few more minutes."

"I'd murder someone for a painkiller right now," Toshiko growled, forcing herself to sit up and look around.

Her bridge crew were in similar states of disorientation and discomfort. Her first officer, Commander Wilkins, was dry heaving

while leaning heavily against the bulkhead, Lieutenant Commander Williams was slumped over her Sensors station, moaning, and Ensign Jones was cradling his head over the Weapons station.

"Captain," Bond spoke up, excited, "You might want to see this."

"Onscreen," Captain Sato ordered, stumbling to her command chair, while the view-screen flickered to life. What she saw astonished her. Literally hundreds of ships floated around right off the bow of the ship, drifting in a loose formation, yet not moving as they spun around each other slowly. That was not what was remarkable about these ships though.

What made them remarkable is that all the ships were of Forerunner design.

"I'm detecting some Keyships and Cruisers in the ghost fleet, ma'am," Bond informed Toshiko, "Most of the ships are of an unknown class, though."

"Holy hell," Commander Wilkins breathed, "This is!"

"Amazing," Lt. Commander Williams finished for Wilkins.

"Do you know what this means?!" Ensign Jones exclaimed, "The amount of technology in this fleet could bolster the UNSC! The Keyships could unlock the way to the Ark!"

"We are all aware of that," Toshiko snapped at Jones, "Bond, what can you tell us about those ships?"

"Well," the Smart AI began, "For one, they are still producing power. That tumble they are in is actually a programmed flight path. I have no idea why they are doing such a thing, but I can find out. Their computer systems are wide open and I am currently sifting through their files."

Toshiko shot a look at Bond's avatar, "I never ordered that."

"With all due respect, ma'am," Bond scoffed, "I can work much faster if I take the initiative."

Captain Sato frowned. Everyone knew Bond was reaching the end of his operational life. This was only the first signs of rampancy.

"I see," Toshiko opened up a small panel on the side of her chair, "Are the ships crewed?"

"Not as far as I can tell," Bond frowned, "I wonder why they would-"

"Thank you Bond," Toshiko cut him off, "That will be all."

With the flick of a switch, the Smart AI of the Stone Angel shut off.

"Schedule Bond for an overhaul when we return to Reach," the captain ordered Jones, who nodded in acknowledgment.

With a few more taps at the holographic display next to her chair, Toshiko brought the backup dumb AI of the \_Stone Angel \_online. A new avatar sprung to life on the pedestal. A little Japanese girl in a school uniform bounced happily, numbers streaming over her body,

"Ohayo, Captain," she chirped, "what are your orders?"

"Continue Bond's task of analyzing the Forerunner ships," the ONI captain massaged her forehead, "and give me a full situational report."

>"Hai," the AI's avatar flickered off as Toshiko sighed. Whoever assigned that dumb AI to this ship had some weird tastes. Plus the sporadic use of Japanese made it sound like a 21st Century Internet Weeaboo.<p>

"Captain," Lt. Commander Williams spoke up, "I've got something on sensors. You're going to like this."

"Onscreen."

The view-screen switched to an oddly familiar sight.

It was a structure almost identical to the one earlier, distinctly disjointed and massive. It was the same circular station, at least in outwards appearance.

"It's nearly twenty kilometers in width," Williams said as her jaw dropped open, "four times as big as the previous one."

Toshiko sat in thought. If these were what she thought they were, then they were Slipspace gates, and by extension, their only way home.

"Wilkins, set a course for that ring," Toshiko laid back in her seat.

"Heading set." Wilkins reported from the helm.

"Engage." Toshiko jabbed her finger forward.

Wilkins turned around in his chair, and cast an incredulous look at his commanding officer.

"Star Trek, really?" he said with more than a bit of patronization.

"Get to work Wilkins," Captain Toshiko snapped, "or I will stuff my photon torpedo so far up your shuttle-bay you will be stuck on impulse power for weeks."

Wilkins rolled his eyes, but turned back to the console and continued to pilot the ship.

As the Prowler gunned its thrusters for a second, sending it on a slow approach to the station, the Stone Angel's dumb AI popped up on the pedestal.

"Captain, the Forerunner ships are attempting to contact us." The AI chirped.

"They're hailing us?" Toshiko raised an eyebrow, "I thought there were no life signs on board."

"Well that's because I'm not alive," a new voice came over the intercom, obviously synthesized.

The view-screen flashed to the image of what appeared to be a stripped-down Forerunner Monitor, hovering on the empty bridge of a Forerunner Keyship.

"Ah, Reclaimers!" it exclaimed, "What a pleasant surprise!"

"A working Monitor!" Williams breathed in shock.

In the 35 years since the end of the Human-Covenant War, working Forerunner installations were coveted treasures, and working Forerunner AI were the crown jewel of all prizes. However, the years were not kind on many AI, and most were found in various states of insanity.

"Is the Flood contained? Were my makers successful in eradicating the parasite?" The Monitor seemed perfectly cheerful, but Toshiko was on guard. Many Monitors seemed amicable at first, only to turn on the humans in a second. These situations had to be handled carefully.

"All known Flood are quarantined. Now, since your curiosity is satisfied, I don't suppose you'd care to tell us who you are and how you got here?" Captain Toshiko crisply addressed the floating light bulb on her view-screen.

"Ah, where are my manners," the Monitor admonished itself, "I am 1304 Iridescent Vortex, Monitor of Installation!" The construct paused for a moment, and then continued in an almost pained tone, "well, I guess I do not have an Installation anymore."

An awkward silence filled the Bridges of both ships as the crew of the Stone Angel tried and failed to come up with a way to comfort an ancient artificial construct. A few minutes went by before Toshiko cleared her throat, breaking the silence.

"I offer my condolences, Vortex. Now, to the matter at hand. May I inquire as to why exactly you are here, and what the purpose of the nearby Installation is?"

"Ah," Vortex started, jolted out of its thoughts, "How silly of me, of course Reclaimer. I shall provide you with all relevant information available to me." The spherical construct bobbed cheerfully, "I am currently watching over a fleet of evacuation ships of my creators. When the Flood overtook one of the Forerunner's inner planets, a small fleet of ships managed to escape them. Knowing that the Halo Array would soon be fired, and with the Shield Worlds being compromised, my creators attempted to leave the galaxy using one the Intergalactic gateways that had been built, but forgotten when the Flood attacked. The very same gateway which you have just used. Regretfully, they all perished when the life support was disabled by the Slipspace Gateway. The gate been inactive for far too long, and it malfunctioned. In fact, you are quite lucky that you are still in one piece."

The bridge crew of the Stone Angel shivered slightly, feeling their mortality.

"We need to return," Toshiko addressed the Monitor, "Does this gate work two ways?"

"Indeed it does," Iridescent Vortex replied, "I'll just switch this one on."

The station began to light up, glowing as Slipspace engines deep within hummed to life.

"I have to warn you Reclaimers," Vortex spoke up, "these gates are not particularly known for reliability during startup. It may generate random Slipspace portals. Anything caught in by them will appear here. No worries, however. The chances of such an occurrence are relatively slim."

Thousands of light years away, a Tartan Patrol Cruiser disappeared in a swirl of nothingness.

### 3. Don't Blink

\*\*Author's Note: Thank you for all the reviews! I think I've kept you guys waiting long enough. Space battle time. By the way, I alternately call Toshiko Sato "Captain Toshiko" and "Captain Sato".\*\*

\*\*Chapter 3: Don't Blink\*\*

"What do you mean the Stone Angel is gone?" Dr. Zeng asked with no small amount of incredulity, "I don't suppose you can be more specific?"

"Sorry doctor," David apologized, "I'm feeling a bit confused myself. This is a Slipspace gate, similar to the one on Earth that leads to the Arkâ€| Howeverâ€| it's a piece of crap."

Sophia blinked in surprise, "What?"

"This is something we have never seen before; a piece of crappy Forerunner technology. It's like all we've had to study of the Forerunners has been their sports cars, and now we've just found a truck," The AI snorted in amusement, "and just like a truck, when starting it up, it's prone to backfire. We're lucky the Stone Angel wasn't torn in half. From what I can tell, it made it to the programmed destination. However, I don't know if they survived."

"Well that's just great," Lieutenant Powers sighed in annoyance, "we don't have any way of getting to the other side."

"Actually," the technician cut in, "we will have a way."

Everyone turned to technician, who suddenly felt like a deer in headlights.

"I never caught your name," Dr. Zeng squinted at the man's tinted

visor, "Who are you anyway?"

The technician removed his helmet, revealing a man no older than 25 with short brown hair and green eyes, "The name is Colton, sir, Colton Smith. I've got a degree in Forerunner Studies, and ONI has me on their payroll."

Powers narrowed his eyes in suspicion, "How come you waited to tell us who you are until now?"

Colton huffed in annoyance, "Because you never asked and just sort of ignored me."

Dr. Zeng nodded, "Fair enough. What were you saying earlier?"

"What I was saying," Colton continued, "was that you seem to have all forgotten about our escort; the Concorde."

"Oh," Sophia slapped herself in the face, "The Paris-class frigate Concorde. How did we forget about it?"

"Maybe because it left a few days ago to scout out the area?" Powers suggested, "Don't feel bad about it. I forgot too."

"I'm contacting them right now," David stated, "They're en route. ETA is ten minutes."

Colton leaned against the wall, "Well, no sense sitting around angsting. Let's start researching."

"Right," Dr. Zeng nodded, activating one of the nearby consoles, "Let's do some science."

\*\*[[Breaking News: Two hours ago, Covenant Loyalists launched an attack on Reach! After a grueling battle lasting an hour, the invading forces were routed. The enemy suffered 75% casualties while the UNSC fleet in orbit only suffered the loss of 4% of the fleet. Stay tuned for a special interview with Dr. Catherine Halsey.]]\*\*

An Imperial officer stood on the bridge of his Tartan patrol cruiser. He was currently patrolling a particularly boring sector of space. There was little to no traffic here, and the nearest planet was a day's journey away at maximum hyperspace speeds.

His superiors probably stationed him here as retribution for that trick involving a speeder and a bag of death sticks; honestly, they had no sense of humor. At least his peers got a good laugh out of that.

Honestly, sometimes the higher-ups could be such assholes. He may have signed up to be an officer, but that was only because he had a family to feed. He had no love for the Emperor. Respect, yes, but no love. True, the officer would prefer a more peaceful society, but that was just the hits off the cosmic deck. He was no rebel, and had no desire to change the world.

"Anything new?" he asked one of the crewmen manning the sensor station.

"No sir," the crewman replied in a bored tone, "Nothing but dust and echoes."

The officer sighed, "Alright, I can't wait until we get back to dock. This ship is always cramped!"

"Sir!" the crewman exclaimed, "I'm getting some really strange readings from all around us!"

The officer was immediately alert, "What kind of distortions?"

"I'm not sure," the crewman replied, "the computers don't recognize-"

Suddenly, right outside the window, the fabric of reality tore open, revealing the gaping maw of black nothingness.

"In the name of the Core, what is that?!" the officer managed to exclaim, right before the distortion swallowed the ship, leaving nothing.

In a millisecond, the Tartan Patrol cruiser was catapulted across tens of thousands of light years through the eleventh dimension. Forces that defied the laws of physics tore at the hull as insane amounts of radiation bombarded the craft.

As fast as it entered Slipspace, it was unceremoniously dumped out, and the weak hull suddenly showed the effects of slipstream travel.

Massive gouges were rent in the armor and swathes of the hull tore away and spun out into space. Nearly half the engines on the rear exploded, and the cruiser visibly warped; the superstructure heavily damaged from its trip through the portal. Bodies and atmosphere vented from numerous breaches in the hull, as blast doors mostly failed to close throughout the 250 meter vessel.

The entire bridge crew of the Imperial ship were thrown to the ground as all around them the bulkheads stretched and groaned; threatening to rip wide open and suck them all out into the cold vacuum. The consoles blared warnings as numerous ships systems were suddenly and violently torn to shreds. The comm channels yelped with voices as crew members attempted to notify the bridge of their plights, only to be dragged out into the cold abyss; their screams never leaving their throats as the breath was sucked from their lungs.

In an instant, the crew of 120 was reduced to 10. 110 people choked on space, as the Stormtroopers flailed in futility as their suits ran out of oxygen.

\*\*[[This Friday, tune in to catch the Premiere of a network exclusive documentary. "ONI: The Dark Secrets of the Office of Naval Intelligence". How the machinations of the UEG's intelligence during the Human-Covenant war services both saved humanity, and nearly brought it to the brink of extinction.]]\*\*

A couple of kilometers away, a fleet of silvery geometric ships and a single predatory corvette circled a large, diamond-shaped ring station. They observed the arrival of the patrol cruiser with astonishment and no small amount of caution.

Captain Toshiko crossed her arms, and gave the Monitor on the viewscreen a scathing look, "The odds were slim, huh?"

If a millennia old sphere designed to hold an advanced artificial intelligence could look embarrassed, that one did.

"Well," it stammered, "low probability does not exclude the possibility."

Toshiko massaged her forehead, "Fine. We're not equipped for First Contact at the momentâ€| Activate stealth features; we're going dark."

"As you wish," the Monitor chirped, before severing the connection. Instantly, the Forerunner fleet disappeared. A few seconds afterwards, the Prowler followed suit.

\_\*\*[[Earth is eagerly awaiting a visit from the Arbiter Thel 'Vadam, who is scheduled to arrive tomorrow. He intends to discuss plans for a final offensive against the Covenant Loyalists.]]\*\*\_

"Damage Report!" the Imperial Officer coughed, using a nearby chair to pull himself up.

"Hull integrity at 50%, sir," one of the remaining crewmen reported, "110 members of the crew, including our entire Stormtrooper garrison has been spaced. Engines are functional at 20%, communications are down, and sensors are mostly inoperative. Shields and weapons are still fully operational. Life support is stable. Hyperdrive has been knocked offline. In fact, I'm not even sure if we have a Hyperdrive anymore."

The Officer grimaced, this was bad. Without a Hyperdrive, it would take thousands of years to reach the nearest planet, and with only 20% engine capacity, it meant that they were effectively stranded.

"Sir," another crewman spoke up, "Navigation is still online, and it reports that from cross referencing the stars, that we are 98,498 Light years from our previous location."

"What?" the Officer looked at the display incredulously. Indeed, they were thrown tens of thousands of light years away from Imperial space, in a manner of seconds, no less.

"Sir!" the sensors officer cried out, "The remaining sensors have picked up a large station near our position! It apparently has a hangar with a breathable atmosphere. We can land there and determine our situation."

The Officer mulled over this. True, he didn't like this; the existence of that station and their apparent "ship-napping" probably wasn't a coincidence, but he didn't have a choice. With the hull so badly damaged, the blast doors were sealed shut. They were stuck in the bridge unless they could exit it without dying. True, he could just override the doors, but they had no suits, and would suck space if they opened the door.

"Alright," he nodded, "bring us in."

The badly-damaged Cruiser fired its maneuvering thrusters and swung about to face the station. The engines on the back fired weakly, and the Imperial ship limped towards its destination.

\_\*\*[[â€|Mayday, maydayâ€|This isâ€|FFGâ€| Forward Untoâ€|immediate evacâ€|Survivorsâ€| Prioritization codeâ€|117]]\*\*\_

Captain Toshiko Sato stared with some concern at the Tactical display on the viewscreen, as the unknown alien vessel limped its way towards the Slipspace gate.

"Wilkins," Captain Toshiko spoke up, "What is your tactical assessment of the alien ship?"

"Their main thrusters are shot to hell, so their ability to maneuver is minimal," Wilkins replied, scrutinizing the images on his console, "but I was able to identify what appear to be weapon emplacements on the hull. There are 20 identical long-barreled cannons. I can't determine what kind of projectile they fire, but I am picking up high energy readings from them; so they are powered."

At times like this, Toshiko missed Bond. True, he may be a bit of an arrogant ass, but his tactical skill was invaluable in situations like this. This was for his own good, though. The UNSC, in the 35 years since the Human-Covenant war, had developed a way to extend an AI's lifespan indefinitely, but it relied on catching the symptoms of Rampancy early. If it progressed too far, there was no going back.

"Reclaimers," the voice of Iridescent Vortex came over the comm, "you must stop that vessel!"

"Why?" Toshiko asked back, "Just leave it to its own devices for now."

"You don't understand!" Vortex sounded slightly panicked, "The Slipspace gate is automatic! It will send that ship through, most likely destroying it!"

Toshiko whirled around, staring at the holographic representation of the alien ship on the tactical display.

"And in the event that it survivesâ€|" Toshiko breathed, "It will find Dr. Zeng. Ensign, warm up the Archer pods! Prep the shields and pulse lasers, we may need them. Wilkins, bring us about!"

The \_Stone Angel\_ crept towards the alien ship, virtually invisible to sensors and invisible to the naked eye, with only a slight shimmer from the photo-reactive panels to indicate its presence.

"Shoot to disable," Captain Sato ordered, "We only need to stop it from moving. Fire at the engines!"

Along the rear of the Prowler, photo-reactive panels slid aside, revealing a missile rack with twelve launch tubes. Propelled on electromagnetic rails, an archaic Archer missile with stealth coating leapt from the invisible ship, and fired its thruster. It oriented itself toward its target, the gunned its main thruster, accelerating to insane speeds on a direct collision course for the alien ship's

engines.

Upon nearing the enemy ship, the missile adjusted its trajectory to compensate for the wash from the ship's blue exhaust. In the last second before impact, the warhead detonated, creating a plasma torch that carved deep into the engine block, before detonating, blowing the rear of the ship into so much scrap.

The Imperial Officer grabbed the bulkhead as his ship rocked, "What was that?!" he exclaimed.

"We were hit by something!" the crewman at the Sensors console yelped, "It just appeared out of nowhere and hit us!"

"Helm, full stop!" The Officer snapped.

With its main engine offline, the Tartan Patrol Cruiser fired its maneuvering thrusters, slowing the ship to a standstill.

"Bring the shields online," he ordered, "as well as all weapons!"

"Sir, what is that?!" one of the crewman cried out, pointing out the Bridge's window. Everyone turned to look.

What appeared to be a shimmer of light moved past their field of vision, and while it was undetectable by their damaged sensor array, it was definitely visible to the naked eye.

"Switch to visual targeting!" the Imperial Officer snarled, "Fire on that distortion!"

20 bolts of high energy particles leapt from the laser cannons, and streaked past the camouflaged Prowler, missing it completely. Well, 19 missed.

Captain Toshiko held onto her armrests as the Stone Angel shook from the force of impact, "Damage report!"

"We've lost our left 'wing', captain! No hull breaches, but we've lost a pulse laser turret and our stealth systems are compromised! Shit, their energy weapons pack a punch!" Commander Wilkins swore loudly.

"Stay calm," Toshiko snapped, "bring the shields online and deploy the pulse laser turrets!"

As the Prowler decloaked, photo-reactive panels slid aside to reveal emitters. An envelope with a hexagonal pattern and purplish tint sprang into being around the stealth corvette. More panels opened to reveal eleven slender turrets, which obviously did not belong to the race that built the corvette. They were Covenant pulse laser turrets. In the aftermath of the Human-Covenant war, the UNSC wanted to upgrade their ships, and it was mostly done ad-hoc. Covenant weapons systems were bolted onto existing ships, often resulting in a Frankenstein creation capable of going toe-to-toe with their Covenant equivalent. The Shield systems were also added afterwards. They were mounted in what were once autocannon positions.

"Evasive Manuevers; get us out of their gun's firing arcs! Target

their weapons, fire!" Captain Toshiko shouted, inputting a command to warm up the Shivas, just in case.

The pulse lasers fired as the Stone Angel started maneuvering like a possessed Yanme'e. Eleven bluish cyan beams of concentrated energy lanced out at the damaged Cruiser, like fingers of death. Right before they hit the hull, however, they hit an invisible barrier, and dissipated as the shields of the Tartan Patrol Cruiser countered the shots. In retaliation, the Imperial vessel opened up with their laser cannons. Multiple shots missed the nimble Corvette while others impacted its shields.

"Dammit, they have shields!" Captain Sato cursed, "What are they firing at us?!"

"Sensors are reading it as highly energized gas! I don't know how they did it, but it's brought our shields down to 80% integrity!" Jones called back, slightly panicked.

"Dump all auxiliary power into the engines!" Toshiko snapped out, "We can't afford to take more hits! I don't care if we burn out our reactor; push those engines to the red line!"

The Stone Angel's engines and thrusters suddenly flared up like a supernova, as the ship spun, rolled, and swerved; pulling off crazier maneuvers than even a TIE fighter was capable of. The Tartan Patrol cruiser's damaged sensors struggled to lock onto the wildly dodging ship. The Cruiser itself was firing its thrusters to bring more of its guns to bear on the small Prowler, but with the damage sustained to the main engine, its maneuverability was limited. All the while, the pulse lasers kept up their relentless barrage of the Imperial ship's shields, which showed no signs of dropping.

"Just how fast is that little ship?!" one of the Imperial crewmen swore as the alien vessel cartwheeled past their window, swarmed by crimson laser bolts as it pummeled the Cruiser with cyan energy beams.

"Shields are holding sir," the crewmen added, "whatever they're firing at us, it can't dent our shields."

"Alright then, finish them once and for all," the Imperial Officer growled, "override the safety parameters on the laser cannons, hit that ship if it's the last thing you do!"

A chorus of affirmatives resounded throughout the Bridge. Immediately the laser cannons started spewing an almost continuous spray of red laser bolts, filling the space between them and the Stone Angel.

No amount of dodging could save them now.

"Shields are about to collapse, captain!" Wilkins shouted, "10% and falling!"

"No choice, then," Toshiko snarled, "Hit them again with our Archers! Blast them out of the sky!"

Three more Stealth Archers launched from their racks, and streaked towards the Cruiser. Toshiko half expected them to pancake against the shields. However, they passed right though, slamming into the

laser cannons of the Tartan Patrol Cruiser, gutting the ship and blasting the entire rear end of the cruiser into an expanding sphere of space debris.

At the same time, energy bolts that had been fired from the cannons before they were destroyed impacted the shields of the Stone Angel. Five bolts slammed against the shields before they flickered and dissipated. Two actually hit the ship itself, blowing off the other "wing" of the craft, and impacting mid-ship. Both the Bridge crews of the Stone Angel and the Tartan Patrol Cruiser were thrown to the floor by the impacts.

"Sitrep!" Toshiko called out over the blaring alarms.

"Hull breach in the armory! Sealing affected bulkheads!" Wilkins shouted out his reply, mashing his console's keyboard.

"Archer pod is unresponsive!" Ensign Jones cried out, "Control lines to the Pulse Lasers have been cut! Shields are overloaded! Engines have overheated and locked up! We're sitting ducks!"

The Stone Angel's maneuvering thruster automatically brought the ship to a full stop as heat sinks sprang out from behind panels in an attempt to dump the heat while hundreds of gallons of coolant were vented out of the ship. Within the ship, the Bridge crew frantically pressed buttons and attempted to get responses out of disabled backup systems.

Toshiko stared in abject horror as the remains of the enemy ship, which at this point was just the Bridge section, drifted in front of the immobile Stone Angel. The reason for her fear wasâ€¦

The enemy ship still had one functional gun.

"What just hit us?!" The Imperial Officer was in shock after what felt like an earthquake shook his ship.

"I don't know!" one of his crew yelled, "We've lost most of the ship!"

"Only one cannon is operational, sir." The weapons officer stated, "Reactor has been critically damaged. Life support failure is imminent, and shields are offline. However, the laser cannon still has enough power for one shot."

"Then fire it," the Officer snapped, "I'm not going down alone."

As the remains of the Cruiser rotated to bring its only remaining weapon to bear, a swirling disk of nothingness opened up between the two vessels. A large, 535 meter angular gray silvery starship emerged. Its bow was double-pronged, and its two bulky engines on the back screamed as it propelled itself out of the Slipspace rift. On its side, the name Concorde was proudly displayed.

The last laser cannon on the Tartan Patrol cruiser fired. The bolt of energy meant to combat star fighters impacted 60 cm of Titanium-A ablative battleplate, and left no more than a dent upon the advanced armor.

On the bridge of the Stone Angel, a feminine voice with a slight

German accent came over the comms.

"Heard a little bird got lost. Missed us?"

Captain Toshiko smiled, "Never been happier to hear your voice, Allana."

Captain Allana Lalonde smiled on the bridge of her Paris-class Heavy Frigate. Her long, non-regulation hair hung around her pale complexion. Her sky blue eyes glinted with amusement at being able to play the Knight-in-Shining-Armor.

"Shall we dispatch the hostiles for you, Captain?" she asked, "Seeing as you couldn't do it yourself?"

"We could've done it ourselves," Toshiko complained indignantly, "but they got lucky and shot up the control lines to our weapons."

"Now is not the time for complaining, Toshiko," Allana chuckled, "Just accept the fact that you needed our help. You're buying drinks next time. Lock our point defense guns onto that alien vessel." The last part was said to a crewman manning the weapons station.

"Actually," Toshiko cut in, "The remains of that ship can fit in your hangar, correct?"

"What are you thinking of, Captain Sato?" Allana asked curiously.

"Do you still have that Spartan onboard, Captain Lalonde?" Toshiko smirked.

"Oh," Allana's eyes widened, before she started grinning from ear to ear, "Oh yes. Rolling out the welcome mat."

The Concorde maneuvered to swallow up the crippled enemy ship as the Stone Angel pressed itself against the Paris-class Frigate's docking ring. Nearby, an entire fleet of Forerunner ships revealed themselves, filling the empty void.

Captain Lalonde's eyes widened, "Whoa," she breathed, "where did they come from?"

"They were always here," Captain Sato quipped as she walked onto the Bridge of the Concorde, "Your Bridge is roomier than mine, where can I find your interior decorator?"

"Very funny," Allana dryly replied, "Seriously though."

On the Bridge's Holotank, the image of a Monitor sprang to life.

"Greetings! I am 1304 Iridescent Vortex, Monitor of Installationâ€| " The construct paused, before continuing, "Anyways, I am already acquainted with Captain Toshiko. May I inquire as to who you are?"

"Certainly," Allana responded crisply, "I am Captain Allana Lalonde of the UNSC."

"Fascinating," Vortex remarked, "has Humanity turned into a matriarchal society?"

Both Captains were taken aback by the comment.

"What makes you say that?" Toshiko asked, just slightly confused.

"Oh, I am sorry if I am assuming incorrectly, I just conjectured that since both of you are commanding officers, I justâ€œ!" Vortex seemed genuinely embarrassed, "Forget what I just said; I often say what is on my mind without thinking about it. It is one of my faults."

"Don't worry about it," Allana waved dismissively, "We're not offended."

"Good," Vortex immediately perked up, "Now, to matters at hand. What do you intend to do with the prisoners you are taking?"

Toshiko smirked mischievously, "Giving them the old UNSC welcome."

\*\*[[Connection established to UNSC databaseâ€|\*\*

\*\*Paris-class Heavy Frigate-Refit\*\*

\*\*After the Human-Covenant War, most ships underwent some form of upgrade to deal with any Covenant ship they may encounter. The Paris Class's refit has been called "Wonderful" by engineers, "Stunning" by Captains of said vessels, and "Overkill of the highest degree" by Admirals.\*\*

\*\*Length: 535 Meters \*\*

\*\*Width: 199 Meters\*\*

\*\*Reactor: Hybrid Deuterium-Plasma Fusion Reactor(s)\*\*

\*\*Slipspace Drive: Forerunner-Enhanced Shaw-Fujikawa Translight Drive\*\*

\*\*Shielding: Forerunner-Enhanced Origin-class Shielding (Equivalent to Covenant Destroyer shields)\*\*

\*\*Armanent:\*\*

\*\*Enhanced-MAC (Capable of firing a 600-ton tungsten shaped-charge slug at 60 km/s. 30 second recharge.)\*\*

\*\*Shiva warheads (12)\*\*

\*\*Oversized Archer Missile pods (26)\*\*

\*\*Point Defense Guns (12)\*\*

\*\*Twin Defensive Railgun Turrets (6)\*\*

\*\*Covenant Pulse Laser Array (8)\*\*

\*\*Plasma Torpedo Launcher (2)\*\*

\*\*Prowler-class Corvette-Refit\*\*

\*\*The venerable Prowlers of ONI underwent refits after the Human-Covenant War. At the time, they were formidable. Now, they are so much tissue paper in a straight up fight. They have since been replaced by Kagemusha-class Prowlers. All refits are listed here, as most details are still classified for ONI personnel ONLY.\*\*

\*\*Slipspace Drive: Forerunner-Enhanced Shaw-Fujikawa Translight Drive\*\*

\*\*Shielding: Forerunner-Enhanced Jackal-class Shielding (Equivalent to Covenant Frigate shields)\*\*

\*\*Reactor: Oversized Hybrid Deuterium-Plasma Fusion Reactor(s)\*\*

\*\*Armanent:\*\*

\*\*Covenant Pulse Laser Array (12)\*\*

\*\*Archer Missile Pod (1)\*\*

\*\*Shiva warheads (2)\*\*

\*\*\*(Hornet Minelayer removed to free up space for oversized reactor.)\*\*

\*\*WARNING! UNAUTHORIZED ACCESS OF DATA DETECTED! THIS CONSOLE IS NOW LOCKED. ]]\*\*

\*\*Authors Note: I hope you liked my unique form of line breaks. They're supposed to be transmissions through UNSC space. Anyways, while the Prowler technically lost the battle, I think I gave them a pretty good chance. The Tartan Patrol Cruiser is less heavily armed than the UNSC Stealth Corvette, but the \*\*\_\*\*Stone Angel\*\*\_\*\* has thinner armor than the Patrol Cruiser. The weapons technology is also very different. Do you know how hard it is to find explanations on the workings of Star Wars weaponry without having a load of Pseudo-Science slapped in my face?! They don't explain how laser cannons work, only how blasters do! It's frustrating. Well, I'm open to criticism. Please review this chapter.\*\*

\*\*Also, I'm looking for Beta readers, so if you can volunteer your servicesâ€| and I'm toying with the idea of changing the tilts of this fic to "Fifty Shades of Overkill". Also, what would you think if I wrote a Mass Effect crossover with Halo that took place in this same story universe? Do you think I should go for it?\*\*

#### 4. Rekindled

\*\*Author's Note: The First rule, The Doctor always lies.\*\*

\*\*Chapter 4: Rekindled\*\*

"Well that was anticlimactic."

Captain Allana Lalonde stared at the unconscious bodies of the ten humanoids who commanded the alien ship. They were out cold.

"I was hoping they'd put up a fight," the Spartan-IV remarked, his armor a pristine blue, "but I can't say I'm complaining. Besides, this probably helps prevent any medical complications from wounds."

"I know that, soldier," Allana replied, "It's justâ€ It would have been fun to put the fear of 'god' into them."

Inside his helmet, the Spartan smirked, "I know what you mean. I'm a bit disappointed too, but it made my job so much easier."

Allana sighed, "Alright, no use moping over it. Dismissed."

The Spartan walked away, and a couple of ODSTs began putting restraints on the gray-uniformed men. That was what intrigued Allana; they looked completely human. A quick DNA scan revealed that there were some genetic variations, but for all intents and purposes they were human. Theories and conjectures flew around her mind for a minute, but for the moment she shelved them. She'd talk it over later with the shipboard AI, Rose.

The starboard hangar bay of the Concorde was cramped; the remains of the enemy ship had barely fit through the doors; the Sabres and Pelicans had been shoved aside to make room for the sizable hulk. What remained of the ship was a mess; it was more a twisted hunk of metal than anything else. It was hard to believe that it used to be spaceworthy.

Not much was salvageable from the debris field and the derelict, although they had an intact computer systems and weapon. The sidearms from the aliens and that cannon from the ship would certainly yield some interesting technologies in the future. Or at least, Allana hoped they would.

"It looks bigger in person," Toshiko remarked as she walked up to Allana, "I find it hard to believe that that wreck almost blasted me and my crew to atoms."

"Not to mention your ship," quipped Allana, "I expect the altertÃ¼mlich Stone Angel will have to be decommissioned because of this."

"About time too," Toshiko scoffed, "I take pride in her, but in this day and age she is a flying death trap."

Allana rolled her eyes, "Blame it on the UEG and their verdammt budget."

"Amen to that," Toshiko nodded, "Watashi wa fune no watashi no doji de sÅ• nagaku ikinobite kita no ka wakaranai."

Allana looked confusedly at Toshiko, "Pardon?"

Toshiko shook her head dismissively, "It's nothing."

The Concorde's intercom crackled to life, and Rose announced, "Captain, the Forerunner Monitor is requesting to talk with you."

Allana nodded, "Patch it through."

After switching over, Vortex said, "Ah, Reclaimers. May I suggest that we make our way back to our home galaxy? The inhabitants of this one may attempt to find their missing ship."

A nearby holographic pedestal sprang to life, and the avatar of Rose formed. She appeared to be a young high school student in a simple dress, holding a random academic book. She pushed her glasses back up on her face and adjusted her hairband, which held her short hair out of her face, "I concur, Captain. The risks we take with our presence here increase exponentially with every passing minute."

"Alright," Allana agreed, "the UNSC can send a full expedition later."

"Is it alright if we ride piggyback on this ride?" Toshiko asked, "I'm not sure the Stone Angel can survive a Slipspace trip on its own right now, if ever again. There is a lot of structural damage."

"Approved," Allana nodded, "Let's get underway."

Before the Concorde left, several Archers streaked from their pods to incinerate the remainder of the debris in the area. Then the Frigate, along with a truly massive fleet of Forerunner ships, approached the massive Forerunner Slipspace Gate. A colossal disc formed, through which nothing could be seen. With roaring engines, the fleet dived into the rupture; heading home.

\*\*[[Join us at 7:30 for "Lost Ships of the War", where we will debate the fate of ships like the \*\*Spirit of Fire\*\*.]]\*\*

A behemoth of a ship, 2.5 kilometers in length, streaked its way across the stars, gliding on pure momentum. Its engines were dark, and no running lights could be seen on the derelict ship. On one side, scorch marks and torn metal indicated a battle long past. To the observer, this ship would just be seen as a large piece of space debris.

However, the ship's sensors were still operating, and they picked up something. This activated subroutines in the computers, which started up an AI that had not seen use in 56 years.

As she began to thaw the crew from cryo sleep, she spoke the first words uttered on that ship in over five decades.

"Captain, wake up. Something has happened."

\*\*[[2.5 kilometer vessel on approach. Sentient life detected onboard. Ship is out of range of advanced bio-scanners. Activating Sentinels and Enforcers. Standby]]\*\*

The crew of the Phoenix-class Colony ship-refit ran about like ants, bringing the ship out of its long slumber. The Bridge crew dusted off consoles, booting them up and began to scan readouts from the ship's

many systems. Captain James Gregory Cutter and Professor Ellen Anders stood in front of the Bridge's Holotank, which the ship's AI, Serina, was projecting her avatar on.

"What exactly is it, Serina?" Captain Cutter asked, staring at the hologram of the colossal space station. It had a circular center, with four large arms extending outwards. Four smaller arms sat in between the other arms. Green and blue, the colors of a habitable planet, covered the massive construct. Towards the center, though, it seemed as if the land had been scorched to a pitch-black shade.

It looked like a flower.

"I'm not sure, sir," Serina replied, "but the design practically screams Forerunner."

"It's amazing," Anders commented in awe, "the Forerunners liked to build big, huh?"

"Although I was wondering," Captain Cutter mused, "why aren't we back in UNSC space by now?"

Serina seemed quite embarrassed, "My apologies, captain, but according to the sensor logs, the ship got caught in the gravity well of a planetary body and slingshot us in an entirely different direction. My subroutines should have notified me. I don't know why they didn't."

"Well, what's done is done," the Captain shrugged, "we should take this opportunity to resupply. I'm sure there are materials on the station that we can salvage."

"We should also take this opportunity to do some research," Anders spoke up, "the scientific potential that lays in such a structure is immense. If the Covenant aren't there, this will be a golden opportunity to get our hands on some Forerunner technology without having to blow it all up."

"I agree, Captain," Serina added, "We should take every chance we can get. If you feel that we can spare the time, I would also like to land the Spirit of Fire for some repairs. The superstructure isn't holding up well, and it would be wise to repair our heavy deck guns."

"Do it," Captain Cutter nodded, "We should also land some ground forces first to secure the area. Put our forces on alert."

Serina grinned, "Way ahead of you, sir."

The 2.5 kilometer long refit colony ship streaked towards the construct, decelerating as fast as it could. As it did so, Pelicans, Longswords, and Albatrosses jetted out of the hangars, making their way to the surface as the Spirit of Fire began to descend into the artificial atmosphere.

"Sir" Anders said to Captain Cutter, "I would like to go down with the landing party."

"It's too dangerous," he protested, "We don't know what's down there."

"Our lack of knowledge is precisely why I should go down," she countered, "I need to help assess the situation, and nobody on this ship is more familiar with Forerunner technology than me. My presence could mean the difference between this mission going off without a hitch or the death of the entire landing party."

Captain Cutter rubbed his chin while thinking about it, "Alright," he conceded, "but you're to be guarded at all times."

"Understood, sir," Anders nodded, before leaving the bridge.

Nobody said a word as the Captain went back to the holotable, reviewing the data from the sensors.

"Captain," Serina broke the silence that had fallen over the Bridge, "I'm detecting a lot of debris above the construct. I don't recognize a fair amount of the ship classes, but I can tell you one thing."

The holotable changed to display the derelicts of a battle long past. Bulbous purple ships floated abandoned next to a few blocky, gray ships.

"The Covenant were here, and so were the UNSC," The AI stared at the debris field, "There were more Covenant ships than UNSC, so why are there so few UNSC derelicts, and so many more Covenant ones?"

"Maybe they had a brilliant commander," the Captain suggested.

Serina shook her head, "No, only a few Covenant ships show signs of damage from our types of weapons. Most of them display Plasma damage, and a few of them look like they were cut by a high-intensity beam. The Covenant were fighting each other."

Captain Cutter pondered this information. There were separate factions within the Covenant? Did the UNSC ally themselves with Covenant insurrectionists? Whatever the case, it gave him a great sense of satisfaction to see so many destroyed Covenant ships, yet at the same time gave him an equal amount of confusion. Maybe the answers to this were on the ring.

"Of course, radiological readings indicate that this battle happened nearly 35 years ago," Serina remarked nonchalantly, "We've been gone a long time."

"I meant to ask," Captain Cutter added, "exactly how long were we gone?"

"Over 56 years, sir," Serina grinned, "I'm sure we all qualify for a senior discount."

The Captain laughed a bit at Serina's attempt to lighten the mood, "Well, no sense in trying to make conjectures. Let's focus on the task at hand."

"Aye, sir."

\*\*[[Tune in this Friday to catch the new episode of Yayap and Pals!

You'll be moved to laughter and tears as this group of misfit Unggoy attempt to arrest a syndicate of Kig-Yar pirates in this hilarious sit-com produced by Balaho Extratainment.]]\*\*

"Contact! Another contact! Oh god, there's so many of them!"

"Shut it, Ensign!" Allana snapped at one of her Bridge crew, "Rose, Sitrep."

The Concorde's AI appeared in a flash of light, "We've jumped right into the middle of a Covenant Armada!" she frantically stated, "We're outnumbered 201 to 1 exactly. Reading a single CSO-class Supercarrier, 60 CCS-class Battlecruisers, 40 Destroyers of varying tonnage, 70 CRS-class Light Cruisers, and 30 SDV-class Heavy Corvettesâ€| I find no sign of the Forerunner fleetâ€| The likelihood of our victory is slim, captain."

"Status of Dr. Zeng and our landing parties?"

"They are still on the station, but are under fire. Patching them through now Captain."

One of the viewscreens flickered to display a view of Lieutenant Powers from a camera mounted on his shoulder.

"What is it, Captain Lalonde?!" he shouted out over the din of plasma fire and the cracks of supersonic bullets.

"Do you require assistance, Lieutenant?" Allana asked, slightly worried.

"We can hold out indefinitely, Captain!" he yelled, "Worry about yourselves!"

The connection terminated as one of the bridge crew cried out, "We're being targeted! Over 400 plasma torpedoes inbound, and they're charging they're energy projectors! Detecting over 4,000 Seraphs! They are on an intercept course!"

Allana cringed, then steeled her resolve, "Rose, take control of our emergency thrusters and avoid those energy projectors. Charge the MAC and warm up all our weapon systems. Shunt auxiliary power to engines and shields. Launch our Sabres and have them run interference and keep those Seraphs off us. Full speed ahead, evasive maneuvers, pick targets of opportunity and fire at will! We are the UNSC, and we will not go quietly!"

The Concorde's engines roared, catapulting the Paris-class Heavy Frigate forward at blinding speeds as the side hangars disgorged its payload of antiquated Sabre fighters. Against equally-dated Covenant equipment, though, it was a fair fight.

The point defense guns and Archer pods came alive as they joined the pulse laser turrets in a symphony of destruction. Seraphs streaked towards the frigate, only to be torn to bits by the ship or by its Sabre escorts. A few Shivas screamed away from the diminutive frigate to impact on nearby CSS-class Battlecruisers, making their shields flicker and collapse. Archers filled the gaps in between the UNSC ship and the Covenant armada as the little frigate dived right into the mess of alien vessels. The Concorde spewed firepower in every

direction as its MAC barked once, sending the specialized "shield cracker" round directly into a CRS-class Light Cruiser, stripping it of its shields before a pair of plasma torpedoes from the same frigate slammed into its hull, melting it into a blob of slag.

The Prowler attached to the Concorde's hull added its own Shivas to the mix, annihilating a careless Destroyer; leaving nothing but immolated metal.

The Covenant ships descended on the lone ship as it swerved and spun, barely dodging plasma torpedoes and the lancing energy projectors, making the Concorde's shields spark and shimmer as they scraped the powerful energy weapons.

Allana Lalonde gripped her chair for dear life as the ship's inertial dampeners struggled valiantly to negate the G-forces imparted on the crew by the ship's wild maneuvering. She was doing an insane amount of damage for being only one ship, but at the rate they were burning through ammunition, they would soon have nothing left to fire.

Then it would be over.

"Oh dear," 1304 Iridescent Vortex murmured as it stared at the human ship's predicament. Even though they were certainly doomed, they were putting up an impressive fight against the immensely superior force.

"Such bravery must be acknowledged," the Monitor said to itself as it brought its fleet out of stealth mode, "the Reclaimers must survive."

Ten Forerunner Keyships, four Forerunner Dreadnoughts, and a single Forerunner Battleship appeared, all hard angles and geometric shapes.

In the Concorde, Captain Lalonde witnessed the appearance of Iridescent Vortex's military fleet.

"About damn time," she thought, as the Concorde rocked from the impact of a plasma torpedo.

The Flagship reminded her of the Didact's ship from Requiem, Mantle's Approach, and the Dreadnoughts looked exactly like the ones found in various Shield Worlds.

The Covenant fleet momentarily stopped their assault to gaze at the magnificent Forerunner fleet. Many Jiralhanae Shipmasters bowed their heads in homage to their Forerunner gods.

Then the Forerunner ships opened fire.

Hard Light and particle beam weaponry tore through shields like tissue paper and immolated hulls with little resistance. The ships spawned thousands of missiles which bridged the multi-kilometer gap in milliseconds. As they neared the enemy, they opened up tiny Slipspace ruptures, and disappeared into them.

A split second later, many Covenant Battlecruisers and Destroyers exploded into fireballs of plasma as the missiles emerged from Slipspace inside their ships and impacted their reactors.

Shocked out of their reverence, the Covenant fleet opened fire on the Forerunner ships. Energy Projectors, Plasma Torpedoes, and Pulse laser fire ineffectually splashed against the advanced shields. Iridescent Vortex let out the AI equivalent of a growl as he struggled to reboot the weapons systems, which had overloaded after millennia of disuse.

One of the Keyships lost its shields, as the sea of weapons fire overloaded the barrier and slammed into the ship itself. Hyper-advanced alloy stood valiantly against the waves of plasma, but it too gave way. The Keyship simply ceased to be.

The Forerunner fleet broke formation, and accelerated to knife-fighting range. Broadsides of pulse lasers and hard-light guns bridged the gaps as the ships pulled up alongside each other.

As the Covenant armada moved its attention away from the Concorde, the little frigate indignantly fired its MAC at a CSS-Battlecruiser, popping its shields before slamming a Shiva into the enemy hull. The ship was incinerated, reminding the Covenant that the humans weren't out of the fight yet. A few CRS-class Light Cruisers pulled away from the main group to engage the frigate, keeping it busy as it ran out of ammunition and heavy weapons to fire.

A Forerunner Dreadnought emerged from a battle with five CSS-Battlecruisers and 10 Destroyers, leaving its opponents broken and drifting as its own hull trailed smoke and flames. It turned and began to engage a wolf-pack of 12 SDV-class Heavy Corvettes.

The CSO-class Supercarrier fired its twin energy projectors, which bit into the wounded Dreadnought, carving deep gouges into the hull. The ship's running lights flickered as it slowly died. As the last external signs of life faded, the entire ship went up in a spectacular explosion. Several dozen ships were consumed in the blast as the Forerunner ship's reactor went critical.

"You dare dishonor the legacy of my creators with these imitations?!" Iridescent Vortex screamed on all communication frequencies, "You dare make these cheapâ€¢ cheapâ€¢ KNOCKOFFS?! You call that a particle beam cannon?! I'll show you a particle beam cannon!"

The Forerunner Battleship suddenly accelerated, ramming through a couple of CSS-Battlecruisers that made up the defensive line guarding the Supercarrier, and fired a blinding beam of white light at the CSO-class Supercarrier. All throughout this, the Battleship was under withering fire, which only made its shields sparkle. The Supercarrier's shields, on the other hand, stood no chance as they collapsed, allowing the beam to immolate the front half of the Supercarrier. The rear of the ship drifted, before shields sprang back into place around the remnants of the once proud ship. The remains of the ship opened fire on the Battleship, launching plasma torpedoes from its remaining weapons emplacements.

As the crews of the Concorde and the Stone Angel witnessed this scene, the possibility that Iridescent Vortex might be rampant crossed the minds of both captains.

"Hm," the Monitor scoffed as the plasma splashed uselessly on the shields, "you are resilient, but that will not save you."

Before any further action could be taken, a massive Slipspace portal tore open near the group, disgorging a multitude of frigates, cruisers, and destroyers, before the colossal bulk of the UNSC Infinity barreled out of the rift.

"We got your signal, Concorde," it broadcasted, "did you save any dessert for us?"

Allana smiled at the image of the Infinity even as the Concorde's shields failed and pulse laser hits began to gouge the hull, "Glad to see you, Infinity. We could use a hand here."

"Standby, hold onto your hats," came the reply, as the Infinity's fleet lined up their MAC guns.

MAC rounds, Shivas, and Howler missiles screamed away from the UNSC fleet, engulfing the Covenant ships. The Infinity came alive as its missile batteries, Onagers, MACs, Super MAC, and energy projectors smashed and carved the Covenant into so much space dust.

In a single Alpha strike, most of the remaining Covenant ships simply ceased to be. The few Covenant Corvettes and cruisers left panicked at the decimation of their armada, and retreated into Slipspace. The bridge crew of the Concorde breathed a sigh of relief as they began to put out fires that had sprung up on the deck. The frigate listed slightly, sporting some rather nasty hull breaches and a damaged port engine. Scorched hangar doors slid open so the remaining Sabres could land.

The Stone Angel undocked with the Concorde and headed towards the Slipspace Gate to extract their landing party.

"Well, that was a timely save," Toshiko commented to Wilkins, who replied, "Yeah, that seems to be happening a lot lately."

\*\*[2587, November 18\*\*\*\*th\*\*\*\*]\*\*

An entire galaxy awayâ€¢!

\*\*[2 BBY, The Maw, \*\*\_\*Chimera\*\_\*]\*\*

"Sir," an Imperial Officer at the Chimera's sensor station spoke up, "Patrol Cruiser Sega has disappeared from our sensors."

"What?" Commander Palleon replied incredulously, "You mean interference has made it disappear, right?"

"I'm not sure, sir."

At the vague reply, Palleon looked over the officer's shoulder, who replayed the readings. The recording showed the Sega's signal strong and steady, right before the area was flooded with radiation. When it cleared, the ship was gone, and not even active long-range sensors could pick up any sign of the ship. This was particularly distressing; the Empire didn't skimp on the quality of their sensor arrays, and a simple diagnostic confirmed that the sensors were fine.

This was something new; something different.

"Admiral," Palleon addressed Thrawn as he patched himself over the shipboard comm system, "Something has happened that requires your attention."

\*\*[2 BBY, Coruscant, Emperor's quarters]\*\*

Emperor Palpatine stared at the holographic visage of one of his Admirals, Thrawn. He absolutely detested the alien's red, glowing eyes and scaly skin, but he valued his tactical skills, which were something that most of his subordinates lacked.

"What seems to be the issue, Admiral," Palpatine grinned mockingly, "found something you can't handle?"

"No, something ratherâ€| odd has happened. I'm sending you the data now."

Palpatine read the report as it downloaded onto his computer. He scowled. Normally he would just write this up as a random anomaly, but the Force was raising some rather alarming red flags, and if there was one thing the Emperor trusted in his life, it was the Force.

"You were right to alert me to this, Admiral," Palpatine nodded, "this relates to aâ€| suspicion I've been having lately."

"Do you know something about this?" Thrawn narrowed his eyes suspiciously.

"Nothing that you could comprehend," Palpatine dismissed him.

Thrawn snarled, "With all due respect, sir, this happens to concern men under my command; men that could for all I know could be dead or dying as of this moment. I deserve, no, it is my right to know any relevant information! I demand-"

"You don't get to make demands of the Emperor, Thrawn!" Palpatine snapped rather irritably, "Know your place!"

Visibly shaken, the Admiral lowered his head, "Forgive me, my lord."

With no further words, Palpatine terminated the connection.

In truth, the Emperor didn't really know that much more about this whole situation, but he couldn't let Thrawn know that.

He should just forget all about this, and move on with his life, but something told him that there was more to this. The Force warned him that something was coming; and it could potentially bring his world crashing down around him.

\*\*Author's Note: Thanks to NeoDarklight, Follower38, and Brodur for BETAing this chapter.\*\*

\*\*In reply to SpartanDog1's reviewâ€| What? I can't find anything in Halo lore to support your argument. Look, I know you want me to beef up Halo to ridiculous levels, but that's just not going to happen. I

think we can all agree that Halo MAC guns are extreme overkill against Imperial ships, so even with retrofit ships, the UNSC is going to kick Imperial ass. Just relax, you will get your curbstomp. Shoosh-pap, my friend. Shoosh-pap.\*\*

\*\*Anyways, sorry about the lack of a firefight between disgruntled Imperial officers and a Spartan. No, that Spartan is NOT John-117. Do you really think such a distinguished war hero would be assigned to a backwater excavation team?\*\*

\*\*Also, for you Star Wars fanboys out there; don't worry, Imperials have a countermeasure against MAC gunsâ€| sort of. Remember Ray Shields? Sure, they suck power like a motherfrakker, but they can deflect physical projectiles. They didn't save Star Destroyers from the asteroid field, but they can probably mitigate the effects of an Alpha strike.\*\*

\*\*I know there are some plot holes, but have no fear, chapter 5 will be one big exposition between a few characters. Or fear the exposition, whatever.\*\*

\*\*A little FYI, all UNSC ballistic weapons are now coilguns. Heheh, Stormtroopers are in for a nasty surprise.\*\*

\*\*And I WILL NOT be adding weapons to the Haloverse that have no basis in books or the games. The UNSC will not suddenly be wielding magical light whips. However, we may just be seeing some Needler missilesâ€| hehehehehehâ€|\*\*

\*\*Anyways, hope you enjoyed this chapter. As always, review, favorite, and follow.\*\*

\*\*With the advent of Chapter 5 will come the simultaneous launch of my ME/Halo fanfiction, "Fifty Shades of Overkill". It takes place in the same universe as "The Bow and the Gun", and can be read without knowledge of Mass Effectâ€| mostly. If you're a fan of UNSC curbstomps, read the upcoming fic. THAT is the mother of all overkill stories.\*\*

## 5. No Borderlines We Stayed Behind

Author's Notes: Next chapter, you'll get back to the action. As for now, have some world-building.\_

\*\*Chapter 5: No Borderlines We Stayed Behind\*\*

\*\*[2587, November 25\*\*\*\*th\*\*\*\*, Reach Orbital Ring Shipyards]\*\*

Captain Toshiko Sato gazed out the thick two-meter protective transparent anti-ballistic window at her old ship, the Stone Angel, as it sat in the decommissioning dry dock. Great swaths of the ship's armor were carved off and pulled away by sizable construction drones. The name that once graced the ship's side was missing various letters as the underlying panels were pulled off and carted off to the scrap yard. It was a depressing view, really. The Stone Angel had stuck with her through thick and thin, and now it was being decommissioned due to excessive structural fatigue. Well, that, and having a hole blown in its midsection. It was akin to having its keel snapped;

there was no way to fix the aging Prowler.

"An old soldier is laid to rest," a voice cut through Toshiko's vigil.

Captain Allana Lalonde walked up to Toshiko. Both were in full dress uniform, and a few new shiny medals sat on their chests.

"More like a senior citizen," Toshiko joked, "Don't get me wrong, I was proud of my ship, but it was old. I really can't say that I'm sad to see it go."

Allana raised an eyebrow skeptically, "You don't really mean that, right?"

Toshiko grimaced, "I guessâ€| Pragmatically speaking, I know that the Stone Angel was an archaic pile of junkâ€| but it was my archaic pile of junk."

Allana nodded, "I know that feeling. It's like losing an old friend."

Toshiko turned back to the sight of her ship being continually dismantled and sighed, "I guess I'm more concerned about what I'm going to do now. I was merely the chaperone of a scientific expedition out in the boonies. What am I going to do now? I doubt ONI is going to give me another assignment. I mean, I'm not important."

"Alright, stop insulting yourself," Allana scolded her fellow captain, "You single-handedly defeated an alien vessel with a Prowler! It was bigger than you, and from what we now know, more powerful than you! Surely there are many ways in which ONI or the UNSC could use you!"

Toshiko frowned, "I'm not sureâ€| am I really enough to warrant that kind of attention?"

"If you weren't I wouldn't be here," a new voice interrupted Allana and Toshiko's conversation.

An aging Caucasian man with grey hair in full uniform addressed them as he entered the observation deck.

"Admiral Lasky, sir!" both Allana and Toshiko snapped to attention. The Admiral chuckled.

"No need for that," he laughed, "We're off-duty."

"We are just being respectful, sir," Allana smiled.

"Alsoâ€| uniforms," Toshiko gestured at the three of them, "even if we are off-duty, it doesn't look like it."

"Well, don't get too comfortable. Turns out both of you have new assignments." Lasky pulled two thin datapads and handed them to the two of them.

Toshiko's mouth fell open as she read the orders, "So soon? I thought I'd at least get some downtime."

Lasky shrugged apologetically, "Sorry, these come from the top."

"Halsey gave me this assignment?!" Toshiko said incredulously as she read the rest of the assignment.

"I'm being reassigned to the front lines?" Allana stared skeptically at her orders, "I'm also getting a brand new ship? I know I'm good, but I didn't know I was that good."

Lasky grinned, "We only select the best of the best to fight the Covenant Remnant."

"What are you doing?" Allana asked Toshiko, who replied, "Classified, but we won't be working together anymore."

"Oh," Allana blinked in surprise, "Well! It's been a pleasure working with you." She extended her hand.

"The pleasure was all mine," Toshiko shook her friend's hand, "May we meet again."

"That's all a soldier can ask for," Allana replied, saluting her friend, and leaving.

Toshiko returned her friend's salute and left at the same time.

Admiral Lasky stayed for a few more seconds, gazing at Reach. It spun slowly as the sun played across its surface. Countless dots darted about as ships of Human, Sangheili, and Kig-Yar design entered and left the planet's atmosphere. The thousands of space stations glittered like diamonds in the sky, next to the twinkling lights of far-off stars. Near the observation deck, an orbital elevator neared the shipyards as it sped along on its orbital tether. Everything was outlined by the stunning aurora of the planet.

"We've come a long way," he muttered, before turning around and leaving the observation deck empty and vacant.

\*\*[Location Classified]\*\*

"Exactly how many gates did the Forerunners build?" Dr. Catherine Halsey asked with incredulity as she stared at the holographic display of the galaxy. Across it, numerous blue dots indicated the location of various Forerunner Slipspace gates.

"I cannot say for sure," Iridescent Vortex replied, as cheerful as ever, "this map only represents about 17% of the actual data concerning the Extragalactic Exploration Program. All other data was lost when the Domain crashed."

"Hm," Halsey pondered on the situation for a bit, "Dr. Zeng, what's your take on this?"

"I think that this is a great opportunity," Dr. Sophia Zeng answered thoughtfully, "The Forerunners apparently provided some survey data along with this data, so we should start colonizing some suitable galaxies. This one," Dr. Zeng indicated a specific gate, "seems

promising."

Halsey nodded, "I'll contact the president about it. We should probably keep an eye on the galaxy that we just discovered, though."

"Yes, we should," Sophia grimaced in distaste, "a fucking Empire, for crying out loud! Some sort of mystical tyrant too! I'm not sure I want to know what is out there, anymore."

"Well, first things first," Halsey brightened up considerably, "we should use one of our newly acquired Keyships to access the Ark. Maybe we can bring my Spartan home."

Dr. Zeng cast a skeptical glance at the Director of ONI, "It's been five decadesâ€¦ I don't think he's alive anymore."

"You don't know him," Halsey snapped, "Have a little faith."

Dr. Zeng shrugged, "Hey, all I'm saying is that he hasn't had access to the medical technology we have now. The odds of him lasting this long are astronomically low."

Halsey looked despondent for a moment, before glaring at Sophia, "At the very least, we can bring him back for a proper burial."

\*\*[[Visit the Museum of Humanity this weekend for free admission!]]\*\*

"Huh, what do you make of this?"

A Marine was at a loss at how to reply to Professor Anders.

"I don't know ma'am. I'm not a scientist. That's why you're here."

Anders glared at the Marine, "You're no help."

The two of them stood in front of a tall Forerunner spire on the station, which they discovered was called the "Ark". A large portion of the Ark was desolate; destroyed by some sort of cataclysm that also inconveniently destroyed most of the station's interfaces. It looked as if the buildings had been reconstructed, but the ecosystem was still eliminated.

"Professor Anders!" one of the Marines near the scouting party's Warthogs called out, "We've got a message back from base!"

"What is it?" Anders asked expectantly as the Marine approached her.

"One of the Reconnaissance teams found what appears to be an ancient Forerunner Slipspace engine. It looks like it's still in operational condition." He answered.

"That's great!" she exclaimed, "I think we just found our ticket home!"

The scouting party, along with Anders, loaded into the Warthogs,

which sped away, kicking up a cloud of dust.

\*\*[In orbit above Earth]\*\*

The Honor-class Carrier was one of the most notable of Sangheili ship designs. It greatly resembled the old CCS-Assault Carrier, but was a bit more angular, and was adorned with a grey and green paint job. The Light of the New Day was accompanied by two SDV-class Heavy Corvettes. True, they were old Covenant ship designs, but they worked. Really, the only thing that was different about them was shields and a green and grey paint job.

Fleetmaster Vasa Nar 'Ratin stood on the bridge of his Honor-class Carrier Light of the New Day. He clicked his mandibles impatiently as he waited.

"What is taking those humans so long?" he asked no one in particular as Unngoy and Kig-Yar ran around the Bridge, maintaining the massive ship.

"We're being hailed by the Human Admiral, sir!" an Unngoy crewmember called out.

"Put him onscreen," Vasa ordered, and the highly decorated Hispanic human appeared on the Bridge's viewscreen.

"Well, Fleetmaster, are you ready to go?" the Admiral smirked cockily.

Vasa gave him the Sangheili equivalent of a frown, "We are ready to go, Admiral. It is you that we have been waiting on."

The Admiral shrugged, "Sorry, we had some engine trouble."

The human Admiral was in a civilian version of an Infinity-class starship, modified for deep space exploration and colonization. It had been changed for that mission, to serve as a research vessel.

"Regardless, you must be prepared now," Vasa snorted in annoyance, "the way to the Ark opens."

Down on Earth, one of the newly acquired Keyships activated the portal to the Ark. The space in front of the four ships began to distort.

"Helm, set course for the portal." Vasa ordered.

"Aye, Sir," one of the Kig-Yar acknowledged, manipulating the holographic controls. The Light of the New Day's Repulsor Engines flared to life, as it pushed the massive ship into the Slipspace portal. The other two corvettes and the Infinity-class vessel followed.

\*\*[[Join us tonight at 9 for a special on the history of the Covenant's former capital city, High Charity.]]\*\*

"This is impossible!" Professor Anders exclaimed, smacking the Forerunner console in front of her. Like the past few hundred times she tried, the spherical interface just flashed red and displayed the

same series of glyphs that it had been repeating at her for the past hour. She was pretty sure it said "Access Denied".

"That is certainly odd," Serina spoke over the radio, "everything else on the Ark works for humans, I wonder why this one locks you out."

"I'd like to know the same thing," Anders added, "Why is this specific console the only one that locks me out, and is it a coincidence that it happens to be the only one that can activate the Slipspace engines?"

Anders and Serina were so lost in their speculations, they didn't notice the rising humming noise until it was almost a roar.

"What's going on?" Anders shouted in surprise as the entire room began to shake. The massive Slipspace engines that dominated the space began to glow with an inner light, as they emitted a roaring shriek.

"Slipspace anomaly detected over the Ark!" Serina reported hastily, "Ships are emerging!"

"Sorry, but you and the ground team are on your own," Captain Cutter spoke over the radio.

\*\*[UNSC \*\*\_\*Spirit of Fire\*\_\*-Bridge]\*\*

"Red Alert! Serina, sound General Quarters and spin up the MAC! Warm up the Archer pods and prepare the deck guns! Put some distance between us and that portal!"

Captain Cutter barked out orders to his Bridge crew as the roiling tear in the fabric of space and time frothed not so far from his ship.

"Captain!" Serina said, alarmed, "Detecting four ships exiting the portal, 4000 kilometers off our bow!"

"What can you tell me about them?"

"Two of them match Covenant corvette profiles, the first resembles a CCS Battlecruiserâ€¦ but I can't make out the fourth ship."

"Get me a targeting solution on those corvettes, Serina. Keep putting some distance between-"

"Sir!" one of the Bridge crew yelled, "We're being hailed!"

"Open a channel!" Cutter ordered.

There were a few seconds of static, before a distinctly human voice came over the speakers.

"Well, well, well. Guess you aren't so lost after all. This is Admiral Hackett of the UNSC vessel Everest. Welcome back from history, Spirit of Fire."

Author's Notes: Well, that was fun. Sorry for the short chapter, but I really don't have much to work with. I am just setting up the stage

for the next chapter, which takes place five years later. You'll get one of those annoying timelines, sorry.\_

\_If anyone noticed my little ME reference at the endâ€| well, remember when I said that I'd be writing a Mass Effect/Halo crossover? Yeah, I'm doing that. It's the sister fic to "The Bow and the Gun". So go give "Fifty Shades of Overkill" a read.\_

\_As always, read and review. If you have any questions about the technical aspects of this story, PM me. I'll gladly discuss the mechanics of Turbolasers vs. Energy Projectors all day long.\_

## 6. Entering with a Bang

\_A/N: Credit to Follower38 for BETAing this chapter! Follower did a really, REALLY good job. As in, this chapter sucked before it was revised. Thanks! Also thanks to NeoDarklight who caught a couple of typos. Brodur, thanks for looking it over, too.\_

\*\*Chapter 6: Entering with a Bang\*\*

\*\*[3 ABY, Tatooine, Mos Eisley Cantina]\*\*

It was like that band on stage only played two songs. They played the same two damn songs over and over again.

REPEATEDLY FOR THE PAST HOUR.

Han Solo swore on the nine Corellian Hells that if they played the same two songs again he was going to stick them where the sun don't shine. Thankfully, they decided to take a break.

Han cast a quick glance at his chronometer. Where was the agent he was supposed to meet? The Rebel Alliance had recently received an anonymous message from some group, saying that they wanted to help. This was where they were going to meet, but they were supposed to have arrived almost an hour ago! Chewbacca sat at the bar, constantly scanning for trouble, because with every passing second, the whole thing began to stink more and more like a trap.

The conversations in the bar trailed off as two individuals entered the Cantina. A tall woman with black hair and a soft face cast her gaze around the establishment. Accompanying her was a blonde man of about the same height. They were wearing rather dull gray and brown clothing. Satisfied that they were unimportant, the patrons of the Cantina went back to their conversations. One thing that didn't go unnoticed by Solo was the fact that these people were in some form of military. He himself had served in the Imperial Forces until he deserted. That fact alone alerted him to these people, despite how well they hid their training.

Han recognized the two as people with a purpose, and they quickly zeroed in on Chewbacca. The man sat at the bar as the woman went up to the Wookie. Under his table, Han gripped his blaster, just in case.

"Graaawww," Chewbacca growled the challenge, which translated to, "You look new here."

"No newer than the Emperor's pants," the woman stated the correct reply. Chewbacca nodded, and motioned over to Han, who briefly wondered who came up with their confirmation statements. Unnoticed by any of them, a cloaked figure in the corner of the bar left at that moment, bring out a communicator as they left.

The woman walked over and sat down at Han's table. Before she sat, Han got a glimpse of her sidearm. It was mostly obscured by her holster, but it was silver, blocky, and definitely not like any blaster he had seen before.

"Your Wookie friend is charming," the woman smirked, "He would make a great bouncer."

Han gave her a scathing look, "Yeah, funny. Anyways, you're my contact?"

The woman nodded, "Yes. My name is Toshiko Sato."

"Well I'm Han Solo," he raised his eyebrow in suspicion, "You've got an odd name."

Toshiko shrugged, "Meh, I've heard odder. Sorry for making you meet me in such a public spot, but my superiors seem to think that this was the ideal location."

"It's far from ideal," Han groaned, "Jabba the Hutt is gunning for my hide right now. I kind of owe him some money."

"Sorry to hear that. Anyways, on to business," Toshiko lowered her voice, "It is the understanding of my group that the Rebel Alliance is in desperate need to funding and supplies."

"Yeah," Han whispered back, "We've got a base for now, but who knows how long that will last for. It's all we can do to fight a guerilla war, and even then we don't have too much of an impact on the Empire. Sure, destroying the Death Star was a pretty major blow, but they keep pulling resources out of their ass. We can't match it."

"What if I told you," Toshiko grinned, "that my group is willing to offer our support for the Rebel Alliance? We have a significant number of ships to commit to the fight. More than enough to take on the Empire in a full blown war."

"Really?" Han crossed his arms and leaned back, "Then why hasn't anyone heard of your group? You don't simply accumulate that much power and fly under the radar."

"Oh, nobody knows about us, I guarantee it, Mr. Solo. In fact, I'd go so far as to say that we are unknown to the entire galaxy."

"You're bluffing," Han leaned forward, "This is a trap, isn't it? And I just walked into it like a big idiot."

"I assure you, this is not a trap!" Toshiko hissed, "My organization is willing to help the alliance! Ours is an independent party willing to help your cause!"

"When Banthas fly." Han shot back, "How do I know that you aren't an Imperial spy, and you're trying to get me to divulge sensitive

information?"

Taking a brief glance to make sure no others were looking towards them, Toshiko mouthed. 'The location of alliance's hidden base is on the sixth planet in the Hoth system.' A chill went down Han's spine. For anyone outside of the alliance to know that information, literally anyone, meant that the alliance had been infiltrated. It didn't matter that fact it was by a non-Imperial, that they had been meant either they were getting sloppy in their security or these people were exceptionally skilled. Either prospect was terrifying.

"If the Empire knew that, Mr. Solo," Toshiko spoke, "they wouldn't bother with deception; they'd simply send in an armada and submit Hoth to a Base Delta Zero." Solo shuddered at the thought, Base Delta Zero was code for essentially annihilating a portion of a planet via Orbital Bombardment. They wouldn't even bother sending an invasion force, just aiming at whatever section on the planet that had a decent energy signature and blasting it till the surface was molten slag. Even a frozen iceball like Hoth.

Han was pretty much convinced; it wasn't the Empire's style to use elaborate deception when such sensitive information was available. He would just send in the fleet, and wouldn't even bother with such a far-fetched ploy.

"Alright" Han tentatively began, "Let's say I trust you, what then?" Han was taking a big risk, to even consider this alliance. But at this point, he realized he needed, no had to, trust them.

"Then," Toshiko replied, "I would give you coordinates for a meeting between our superiors."

The ambient noise in the Cantina dropped again as four more individuals entered the establishment. Toshiko, her partner, Han, and Chewbacca tensed up as they saw just who entered; a squad of Imperial Stormtroopers.

Under the table, Han drew his blaster, and Toshiko slipped her gun out of her holster, thumbing the activation button. A faint whine was heard as it drew power.

The Stormtroopers quickly scanned the room, and quickly picked out Han and Toshiko. Two of them marched over to the table while the third stood guard by the door. The forth taking position a distance way, his line of fire covering his other two comrades with his DLT-20A blaster rifle.

"You two," the first Stormtrooper stated with authority, "you're coming with us." His E-11 series Blas-Tech rifle in his hand, not quite aimed at them but not directly away from them either. His partner aiming his own E-11 at the group.

As one, Han and Toshiko acted. Han's shot nailed the first Stormtrooper in the head, while Toshiko fired her gun point blank at the second Stormtrooper's chest. There was a whirring noise a split second before the sonic boom from the coilgun-accelerated projectile drowned out the blaster as the ferro-magnetic slug punched a clean hole in the Stormtrooper's chest, and blasting a fist sized crater out the back. The cheap, glorified environmental suit stood no

chance, and the slug impacted the wall on the far side of the cantina.

Both Imperial soldiers dropped like rocks. Chewbacca shot the third trooper on the far side in the shoulder. Toshiko's partner grabbed an odd jagged piece of silvery metal from his holster, at the same time, charging toward the wounded trooper. As he lifted it, other bits of metal assembled themselves around the disconnected hilt. By the time it was raised, it was whole; an angled, blocky thing that barely resembled a gun. He fired a few shots to prevent the Stormtrooper from aiming his weapon. Bolts of golden energy smacked into the trooper's armor, penetrating it and wounding him but not lethally. As Toshiko's guard got closer, he held down the trigger on his weapon and four glowing yellow translucent fins sprang out of the sides, trembling for a second.

Before the Stormtrooper could react, the man fired. A cluster of golden energy bolts blasted out of the alien weapon, slammed into and through the armor at high speeds. Once through the armor and in the body, the energy spread out. The Stormtrooper, much to Han's shock, and everyone else's, slowly disintegrated outwards from the wound in a flurry of golden sparks.

When they all looked toward the door, the fourth trooper had disappeared, along with the majority of the cantina's patrons. "Move!" Toshiko shouted, rushing for the door.

'Who were these people and what the in the Corellian hells are these people carrying?' Han thought as he followed his newfound 'allies' out the cantina. Toshiko was carrying what he now recognized as a slugthrower! Sure, it fired much faster and did much more damage than most slugthrowers, but the entire concept was so archaic! Most modern armors would stop a slug thrower shot with the odd exception such as Verpine rifles. And that other gun was some sort of energy weapon. It definitely wasn't a blaster, but it didn't resemble any other sort of weapon native to the galaxy! No weapon could switch from a regular blaster into a scattergun! Not like what they had! Han had a lot more questions, but realized now was not the time to ask them.

As the four of them rushed out onto the street, they immediately came under heavy blaster fire. The remaining Stormtrooper had returned with reinforcements. Han, Chewbacca, and Toshiko's guard took cover behind the random crates and speeders strewn out in front of the cantina, but Toshiko was a second too slow. Han watched in muted horror as a blaster bolt streaked its way towards her head. A second before impact, however, it appeared to dissipate, and the area that it occupied momentarily shimmered golden. These people had personal energy shields!

The technology for personal energy shields had since long been lost since the times of the Old Republic. Only within recent decades had they been rediscovered and even then only elite units had access to them. If these people had the means to mass produce personal energy shields, it would turn the tide in favor of the alliance in any infantry-related combat scenario.

Toshiko fired back at her attackers, the crack of her slugthrower echoing throughout the vacated street. The rounds that thing was firing were going so fast that they left plasma trails. Han had never seen a slugthrower capable of firing such high-velocity rounds! A

couple of Stormtroopers bought the farm as 12.7x40mm M225 Semi-Armor-Piercing High-Explosive rounds punched clean through their armor and skin, detonating inside their chest cavities. The craters they made out the Stormtrooper's backs were simply massive, coating the ground behind them in obscene amounts of gore. Han gagged a bit, along with the remaining Stormtroopers; they hadn't seen that much literal bloodshed in a long time. A hatch on the top of Toshiko's gun popped open and a canister ejected. A split second after Toshiko slammed in a similar canister into the gun and closed the hatch.

The man accompanying Toshiko raised his silver firearm, and began spamming the remaining Stormtroopers with golden bullets; "Go!" he shouted, the gun disassembling partially, its parts floating in midair near the other parts as a cylinder dropped from the bottom of the strange weapon. "I'll cover you!" He placed a cylinder in the slot and the Z-110 Directed Energy Pistol/Exotic "Boltshot" reassembled itself and he fired off more shots towards the Stormtroopers.

Han and Chewbacca followed Toshiko as they all made a dash for the spacedock.

The man began to backpedal, about to follow his superior officer, when an ion blast managed to make contact, overloading his shields. He tried to dive for cover, but took a blaster bolt to his left leg. He cried out in shock and pain as the particle beam bolt burned clear through his knee, leaving his leg mangled and useless. He crashed onto the dirt as he still tried to run on the wounded knee.

Seeing their chance, the Stormtroopers began to move up, intending to take the hostile prisoner. As the Stormtroopers approached the crippled soldier, he pulled out a sphere studded with spikes from his back. A grin appeared on his facing at the thought of denying his new enemies the satisfaction of taking him prisoner. As they closed in, he pressed one of the spikes on the Z-040 Attenuation Field Generator "Pulse Grenade", a large orange spherical energy field sprang into being from the spiked ball, the almost paralyzing the unfortunate Imperials as every nerve in their body screamed, along with their HUDs.

After a second of the lightshow, the sphere imploded, disintegrating Toshiko's guard and the Stormtroopers surrounding him into thousands of glittering bits of light. Followed by secondary explosions from the other munitions on the guard's body, plasma fire enveloping the area and scorching the Tatooine earth until it naught but ash was left behind.

Toshiko heard the explosion but kept running. Using her Neural Lace, she knew the moment when her bodyguard's vitals flatlined. It was a shame, but his sacrifice was not in vain. He died so that the UNSC could help liberate this oppressed galaxy.

Toshiko, Chewbacca, and Han rounded the corner, entering the main area of the spacedock. At an intersection, Toshiko tossed Han a small datachip.

"Coordinates for the meet up," she quipped, "See you again, Solo."

She took off in the opposite direction, as Han and Chewbacca dashed towards the Millenium Falcon's landing pad.

Two minutes later, a pair of ships lifted off from the spacedock. Han looked out his window to see a Corellian "Blockade Runner" lift off from a landing pad, and make a hard burn for orbit. Deciding he'd stuck around long enough, Han set a course for Hoth, and floored the engines. As the Falcon neared the Hyperspace Lane in space, he began to wonder about their mysterious benefactors. Could their assistance really help win the rebellion?

The Falcon streaked into hyperspace, as the "Blockade Runner" encountered some trouble.

Captain Toshiko Sato sat in the pilot's seat of an empty CR90 Corvette, as she stared at the looming form of an Imperial Star Destroyer on an intercept course.

"Damn," she muttered. This was a good ship, and it would be a shame to lose it.

Toshiko quickly left the bridge, and made her way to the starboard docking hatch. Stepping through it, she entered her Kagemusha-class Prowler, Corner of the Eye. Quickly, she made her way through the utilitarian gray corridors; a stark contrast to the wide whitewashed hallways of the Corellian corvette. A short turbolift ride brought her to the command deck, also colloquially known as the Bridge, or the CIC.

Personally, she preferred the term "Bridge", as she was a particularly avid "Trekkie". Decades ago, in an attempt to wipe out xenophobic sentiments, ONI had managed to revive and promote old Sci-Fi series, such as "Babylon 5", "Stargate", and all the "Star Trek" series. It didn't really work, but it did get Toshiko hooked on TNG.

The turbolift doors slid open, revealing the cramped, utilitarian bridge of the Corner of the Eye. It really wasn't that big, and only had room for the captain, two officers, and three other people. The ceiling was low, and there wasn't that much light. The whole front wall was coated in viewscreens though, which gave a sort of window effect. Of course, the Bridge was ensconced deep within the ship; it wouldn't do to lose the command crew due to an enemy's lucky shot.

The Bridge itself was empty; the helm and weapons station vacant. Toshiko had come alone on this mission, save for her bodyguard.

Come to think of it, that was a stupid mistake. Ah well.

"Bond," Toshiko called out to the Prowler's AI as she sat down, "Charge the Slipspace Drive, set a course to rendezvous point Alpha. Detach the docking clamps, and set the Corellian corvette to full speed, shields to double front." There was no response as the Office of Naval Intelligence's or ONI's, were much like their human counterparts: actions spoke louder than words.

A dull thud echoed throughout the ship, as the much larger Prowler, still cloaked, detached from the little Corellian ship and slowly pushed itself away under the cover of active camouflage.

Meanwhile, the Blockade Runner's engines suddenly flared up with

power and light, as the propulsion systems overclocked each other. The diminutive craft immediately set itself on a collision course with the Star Destroyer, and it was only getting faster.

Onboard the Bridge of the Star Destroyer, the Imperial captain smirked.

"They're accelerating!" one of the officers in the pit called out.

"What, do they think they can outrun us?" the captain scoffed, "Don't make me laugh."

"It's on a collision course!" the same officer shouted.

It took a few seconds for the captain to process that tidbit of information, and by then it was too late.

"Evasive maneuvers!" he yelled at the top of his lungs, lurching as the ship tried to throw itself off course.

Maneuvering jets all over the Star Destroyer's hull blasted away as the lumbering behemoth struggled to move its massive bulk. It was too slow.

The Corellian corvette impacted bow-first on the Star Destroyer's underside, the cylindrical bow section crumpling like a tin can while tearing up the impact site. The ship turned a bit, continuing on its path of destruction. Sparks flew as the ship grated itself against the hull, leaving a long, ugly scar. Pieces of the Imperial ship's hull and major chunks of the corvette's superstructure flew off into space, as more and more of the corvette was ground away by the Star Destroyer's rapidly dwindling armor. Both ships trembled like a man dying out in the cold. With most of its form lost, the powerful engines on the corvette sputtered and died, leaving the remainder of the ship embedded in the Star Destroyer's underside midsection.

Then, with a flash of light brighter than a star, the ship's reactor blew, blasting a large chunk of the Star Destroyer into oblivion. The crippled Imperial starship turned slowly in space, venting atmosphere and personnel from the gaping crater in its underside. Power fluctuations caused running lights to flicker on and off as the power grid attempted to reroute itself.

Up on the Bridge, the captain stared out the window at his devastated ship. He was going to have one hell of a time explaining this to the Emperorâ€¦.

Unnoticed by the distraught Star Destroyer, a small tear in the fabric of reality opened up, and the shadowy form of a starship entered it. Quick as it appeared, it disappeared.

A/N: Up next on my agenda is a chapter of "Fifty Shades of Overkill", but I think I'm going to write a little bit for "The World We Wrote", and a new crossover before I get to it. Goddamnit I'm juggling too many projects.\_

\*\*The Bow and the Gun\*\*

\*\*Chapter 7: Intermission-Knight and Admiral\*\*

"I don't like this," Han Solo remarked, pacing on the Bridge of the Nebulon-B Frigate Liberator, "They said they would be here over an hour ago, and they still haven't arrived."

He shook his head, "This stinks of a trap."

"It will be fine," Luke countered, as he stared out the window, "The Force hasn't warned me of anything yet. I would probably feel something if this was a trap."

"Right, the Force," Han shook his head. The mystical force. In his opinion, Luke relied far too much on it.

"We've got something on scanners!" a sensors operator called, attracting the attention of the entire Bridge crew, "A spatial anomaly has occurred twenty kilometers off our port bow!"

The holographic display on the Bridge flickered to show the roiling tear in the fabric of space, as it disgorged a massive, 5,694.2 meter long stark grey warship.

The lettering on the side flickered as the translation software provided by their contact worked its magic.

UNSC Infinity.

Han was agape at the behemoth of a starshipâ€¦ no, warship. Such utilitarian design was rarely seen outside of Imperial shipyards, and the multiple barrels poking out of the prow was more menacing than the turret emplacements on a Star Destroyer. In fact, Han was sure that it could probably ram a Star Destroyer and suffer little more than superficial damage to the paint job.

"We're being hailed," a technician reported, drawing everyone's attention once more to the holographic projector as it momentarily blurred. When it resolved itself, the image was that of a heavily-decorated man in a military uniform. Han didn't recognize a single picture, symbol, or word on the dress uniform, but he mentally memorized their appearance so he could check the Holonet later.

"I am Admiral Lasky, Commanding Officer of the UNSC vessel Infinity. To whom am I addressing?" the voice of the man crackled over the channel. The language was completely unfamiliar to the crew of the Liberator, so the translation software was a real help. It provided a full and proper translation of what was said, and voiced it over the Bridge's speakers. Han was momentarily disturbed by this. This faction was completely unknown to the galaxy at large, and inversely, had been observing galactic civilization for quite some time. Han momentarily wondered whether they were making a huge mistake by attempting to ally themselves with this "UNSC".

"I am Luke Skywalker," Luke spoke up, "Jedi Knight of the Rebel Alliance. Greetings, Admiral Lasky. You've kept us waiting for some time, were you delayed?"

Lasky nodded onscreen, "Yes. We ran into an Imperial Star Destroyer on patrol. To prevent word of our existence from spreading, we were forced to destroy the patrol."

"It took you an hour to destroy a Star Destroyer?" Han asked in disappointment. It looked as if his expectations were off. If it took a ship that size to destroy an Imperial capital ship, it was weaker than he thought.

Lasky shook his head, "No, the battle itself lasted only a few minutes. We spent the majority of the time hunting down escape pods and stray fighters."

That got Han's attention. Only a few minutes? That was impossibly fast. Was this some sort of intimidation tactic? Whatever, it wouldn't work. It would take more than some alien's word to make him fear this "UNSC".

"Well, I am glad to hear that you were able to handle the situation," Luke nodded politely to Admiral Lasky, "Now, down to business. We extend an invitation for you to visit the Liberator to discuss the terms of our alliance."

"Thank you for the generous offer, butâ€œ we were hoping for a meeting on our-" Lasky began to reply, before Luke cut him off.

"Admiral, with all due respect, very little is known about your faction. As it is, we are not sure whether to trust you or notâ€œ Allowing us to host negotiations on our ship would go a long way into creating aâ€œ friendlyâ€œ working relationship."

Han stared dumbfounded at Luke. That was risky. Tactful, but risky. This could scare off a potential ally, but at the same time, it could prove whether they were truly serious about this alliance. It also masked the fact that the Rebellion was desperate for help. Make it seem like the Rebellion was able to dictate terms at the negotiations. Which, really, it wasn't. Still, couldn't hurt to put on a show.

After a few seconds of silent debate from the UNSC ship, Admiral Lasky turned back to the camera, "After conferring with my senior staff, I have decided to accept yourâ€œ kind offer. Expect our shuttle in ten minutes," then, in a tone that brooked no argument, Lasky added, "I will be accompanied by four personal guards."

The channel was cut immediately.

Luke visibly relaxed, letting out a sigh of relief. Turning to Han, he smirked, "I thought that went well."

A/N: Shortest chapter I've ever written. Mostly to get rid of that preview, and I did promise an update on New Years. So I'm resuming this story. I apologize for the incredibly long hiatus, but I've been obsessed with other story ideas. I still am, but I am committed to finish this, along with my other stories.\_

End  
file.